A traffic plan to make residential areas car-limited

- traffic planning in Groningen

in the 1980s (2) -

S. Tsubohara

URSI-report 322 Urban and Regional Studies Institute University of Groningen, The Netherlands P.O. Box 800, 9700 AV Groningen

May 2007

The Urban and Regional Studies Institute (URSI) has been established for coordinating research projects in the field of urban and regional planning, demography and human and economic geography within the Faculty of Spatial Sciences at the University of Groningen in the Netherlands.

Abstract

Since early in the 1970s, it had been consistently a political principle, in a traffic policy, for the PvdA of Groningen to make not only the inner city but also surrounding residential neighbourhoods car-limited. With the Traffic Circulation Plan (Verkeerscirculatieplan, VCP) for the inner city being introduced in 1977, the municipality of Groningen, under the PvdA wethouder, set about making a traffic plan for the whole city area, the Plan Traffic and Transport (nota Verkeer en Vervoer), whose objective was originally to keep through traffic out of residential areas. This paper analyses the planning process of this plan, in terms of this objective. Experiencing strong opposition from the business community against not only the VCP but also the traffic plan for the northern neighbourhoods, the political leaders of the PvdA had become very cautious in presenting a traffic plan that included measures to restrain car traffic. The draft, Discussion Plan, which was published in 1979, was already very ambiguous in terms of making residential areas car-limited. However, with strenuous objections from the business community, planning had been substantially suspended, and the Definitive Plan, which was published and decided in 1982, was almost empty as a plan.

Contents

1.	Int	Introduction	
2.	A "Finger Exercise"		2
	2.1	"Hard action" against through traffic	2
	2.2	The northern ring road	3
	2.3	"No traffic plan"	5
3.	The Discussion Plan Traffic and Transport		7
	3.1	The original idea	7
	3.2	Facilitate public transport and bicycles	7
	3.3	The main road network	8
	3.4	"Fall out of current main structure"	12
	3.5	Inspraak, not yet participatie	15
4.	Reactions to the Discussion Plan		16
	4.1	The environmental camp	16
	4.2	The business camp	17
	4.3	Residents	20
	4.4	"Big stillness"	22
5.	The Definitive Plan		23
	5.1	Regulations for subsidies	23
	5.2	"Misunderstanding"	23
	5.3	An empty plan	26
	5.4	Decision	28
6.	Conclusion		30
Notes			32
Ref	eren	res	34

List of abbreviation

(political parties)

CDA: Christian-democratisch Appel (Christian Democratic Appeal)

CPN: Communistische Partij van Nederland (Communist Party of the Netherlands)

D'66: Democraten '66 (Democrats '66)

GPV: Gereformeerd Politiek Verbond (Reformed Political Association)

PPR: Politieke Partij Radicalen (Political Party Radicals)

PSP: Pacifistisch-Socialistische Partij (Pacifistic Socialist Party)

PvdA: Partij van de Arbeid (Labour Party)

VVD: *Volkspartij voor Vrijheid en Democratie* (People's Party for Freedom and Democracy)

(citizens' organisations)

ENFB: Enige Echte Nederlandse Fietsers Bond (Dutch Cyclists' Union)

ROVER: Vereniging Reizigers Openbaar Vervoer (Associaton of Public Transport Paasengers)

(business organisations)

KNOV: Koninklijk Nederlands Ondernemers Verbond (Royal Dutch Businesspeople Associaton)

(others)

B&W: college van burgemeester en wethouders

VCP: Verkeerscirculatieplan (Traffic Circulation Plan)

List of Figures

Figure 1: "Mothers occupy busy road in Groningen"

Figure 2: "Blocked Sumatralaan"

Figure 3: bicycle routes through traffic-limited areas

Figure 4: the main road network

Figure 5: the main opening for the districts and neighbourhoods

Figure 6: the main car structure and neighbourhood opening roads

Figure 7: the main bicycle structure

1. Introduction

After the Traffic Circulation Plan (*Verkeerscirculatieplan*, VCP) was introduced despite strong opposition from the business community¹, the PvdA of Groningen lost two seats, resulting in 16 seats, at the local election in 1978. This result did not force the PvdA to change its existing policies, particularly because the defeat of the PvdA was a nationwide phenomenon. It naturally formed a left-wing B&W again, with the CPN and D'66, which was supported from outside by the PSP and PPR, and it naturally turned to traffic problems in surrounding residential areas, with those in the inner city being solved with the VCP.

This paper will analyse the planning process of the Plan Traffic and Transport (*nota Verkeer en Vervoer*), which started immediately after the VCP was introduced, and finished in 1982. This was the traffic plan for the whole city area and was, at least at the beginning, intended to make residential areas car-limited. This paper will analyse this plan (the draft and definitive plan) in terms of this objective, which was stated expressly in the election programs of the PvdA, and how its content was influenced by whom, through scrutinising responses by the public to the draft. Before dealing with this plan, this paper will refer to traffic planning for the northern neighbourhoods, which started almost at the same time and must have influenced the Plan Traffic and Transport. The research is mainly based on investigating written materials, including the local newspaper, Nieuwsblad van het Noorden. The author interviewed some PvdA members who were involved in planning in the 1970s and 80s.

2. A "Finger Exercise"

2.1 "Hard action" against through traffic

The PvdA of Groningen had been rejuvenated by new left activists late in the 1960s, and since then argued for, in a traffic policy, excluding through traffic not only from the inner city but also from surrounding residential areas. For example, the Municipal Programme 74-78, which was published by the PvdA of Groningen for the local election in 1974, proposed a traffic policy as follows:

Keeping out through traffic in the inner city and residential neighbourhoods must be continued as it is. Public transport and bicycles will acquire a clearly privileged position. It must be examined which measures, for example so called "speed bumps" on residential streets, can contribute to safer and more livable environment for residents in residential neighbourhoods; we will implement subsequently with the help of residents.

Facilities for car traffic are limited to what is absolutely necessary. Existing shortcuts will be closed.²

The VCP was introduced for the inner city in September 1977, and the Municipal Programme 78-82 emphasised the necessity to follow the VCP with a plan dealing with traffic problems in surrounding residential neighbourhoods:

The highest priority must be placed on pedestrians, cyclists and public transport. This means a policy oriented toward selective car use. Demolition from the point of view of traffic is not necessary any more and blameworthy.

In areas outside the inner city, a plan must be made, which is oriented toward:

- keeping out cut-through traffic;
- realising traffic-limited areas;
- solving long-term parking pressure on residential neighbourhoods on the outskirts of the inner city;
- priority for pedestrians, cyclists and public transport (...).

(...)

The Traffic Circulation Plan, with the main objective of keeping through traffic out of the inner city, has been effective in dealing with traffic in the inner city. The same effect will result from realising the ring road system. In the coming council period, it will have to be investigated with high priority how traffic and parking pressure can be better distributed in the residential neighbourhoods in-between.³

One of the reasons for this policy was that residents or their organisations, including district teams of the PvdA⁴, had made many complaints about through traffic with the municipality. Frustrated by the slow response from the municipality, they sometimes resorted to "hard action". The following are examples that were repeatedly reported in the Nieuwsblad in those days.

Residents in Selwerd had consistently asked the municipality to improve the dangerous situation on Eikenlaan, which carried heavy traffic and threatened particularly children going to school. They established the "Action Committee Eikenlaan", which demanded to place traffic signals at some intersections, and, as "emergency measures", to place traffic police or "mobile traffic signals". Under its initiative, tens of mothers occupied one of the intersections, blocking traffic completely, for half an hour on October 6th,



Figure 1: "Mothers occupy busy road in Groningen" (Source: Nieuwsblad, October 7th, 1975)

1975 (Figure 1). It also collected 3,700 signatures of residents, asking to "Stop danger of Eikenlaan now", and handed them to the mayor. The municipality, under *wethouder* of traffic Max van den Berg (PvdA), made a plan for the street, which was to narrow the roadway, build bike paths on both sides and place traffic signals at two intersections. The municipal council approved this plan, and residents agreed with this, particularly because the municipality promised to place traffic signals quickly.

Sumatralaan and Kapteynlaan in Korrewegwijk were not only dangerous for children, but also caused serious noise pollution with many lorries. Residents around those streets also formed an "action committee", with the aim of "no through traffic any more on these streets". They lodged a petition and 500 signatures to Jacques Wallage (PvdA), who was the successor of Van den Berg. On November 21st, 1978, "about 200 neighbourhood residents concerned" blocked those streets for half an hour, with banners, saying "stop the heavy traffic!", and singing school children (Figure 2).

These problems around through traffic would just move to nearby streets, if they were tackled separately. That is why, late in the 1970s, the municipality set about making a traffic plan for keeping through traffic out of residential areas. First of all, it tried to make such a plan for the northern neighbourhoods, consisting of Vinkhuizen, Paddepoel and Selwerd.

2.2 The northern ring road

Along the northern boundary of this area, the northern ring road was being planned in those days. Residents around the route conducted an opposition campaign against this plan, worrying about noise pollution, and district teams of the PvdA in Paddepoel and Selwerd also joined in this campaign. In the municipal council, the PPR insisted on



Figure 2: "Blocked Sumatralaan" (Source: Nieuwsblad, November 21st, 1978)

reducing planned two lanes in each direction to one lane, while the national government, which would pay most of the construction cost, pressed the municipality to cut down on the design criteria. However, the B&W held fast to the original plan, and managed to convince the national government of its necessity. The logic put forward by the B&W was to provide a "generous alternative" for through traffic. "If we want to expel through traffic and inter-neighbourhood traffic from residential streets, we must offer an attractive alternative" argued Wallage. The municipal council approved the proposal of the B&W in January 1977.

Subsequently, there emerged a dispute around the junction of the northern ring road and Iepenlaan. Residents in Selwerd opposed the junction itself, on the grounds that it would attract further car traffic. They insisted on building only a tunnel for pedestrians and bicycles there. District teams in Selwerd and Korrewegwijk also opposed this junction. On the other hand, the B&W wanted to build a flyover for this, again considering the effect on through traffic:

"If Iepenlaan is not connected, Eikenlaan will remain a busy through route and it will become difficult to restrain cars on residential streets, because there is no alternative", he (Wallage - by the author) argued.⁹

Because the national government agreed to pay only the construction cost for the level crossing, the B&W introduced a bill that enabled to disburse the lacking about one million guilders from the municipal treasury. The municipal council approved this in September 1978.

However, the B&W did not expect through traffic to disappear naturally from residential areas, only if it provided an attractive alternative route and a connection with it. It was essential to introduce measures that force drivers to use the ring road, as

Wallage argued as follows:

You hear regularly that the traffic problem in Groningen will be solved, as soon as the ring roads are just in service. That is an illusion. The ring roads can work very well, but you must let them work. Therefore, additional measures are necessary. 10

Particularly, there was strong opposition against the northern ring road and its junction, also from within the PvdA, and the municipality itself had to spend large sums of money on them. It would be "a scandal if, for example, the northern ring road is there, that Eikenlaan is still used" by through traffic. Therefore, the B&W gave the first priority to a traffic plan for the northern neighbourhoods.

2.3 "No traffic plan"

Soon after the budget bill for the junction being approved, the Nieuwsblad dated September 11th reported on another bill that the B&W was preparing. The bill allocated 150,000 guilders for making a traffic plan for the northern neighbourhoods. At the municipal council committee on September 25th, Wallage emphasised that the plan was not yet worked out, and denied the rumour that Eikenlaan would be "cut", calling it a "finger exercise" by civil servants. On the other hand, he made it clear that the B&W would not start a discussion "in blank", and the aim of this plan was to keep through traffic out of residential areas:

The objective for us is to keep out traffic strange to neighbourhoods. (...) We spend forty to sixty million guilders on our ring roads. Then, something must be done to keep traffic, which is not oriented toward neighbourhoods, out of adjacent neighbourhoods.¹³

However, immediately after this plan making was reported, shopkeepers of the Shopping Centre Paddepoel launched a large-scale opposition campaign. They made an objection to the aim itself, that is, keeping out through traffic, and therefore tried to prevent planning itself:

The shopkeepers of the Shopping Centre Paddepoel pressed the B and W of Groningen to make no traffic plan for the northern neighbourhoods Selwerd, Paddepoel and Vinkhuizen. (...) The shopping centre finds it unjust that measures are taken to exclude improper car traffic from through route Eikenlaan and surroundings. ¹⁴

According to them, 42% of their sales originated from customers from outside those northern neighbourhoods, and they were opposing "for the sake of 57 businesses in Paddepoel with their about 1,000 jobs" ¹⁵.

The *collegeprogramma*, which was agreed between left-wing parties after the local election in May 1978, stated that the public should be allowed to speak at the municipal council committees. The council committee on September 25th was attended by many members of the Council Shopping Centre Paddepoel¹⁶, whose chairman J. van Loenen, using this brand-new right, demanded directly to Wallage or other councillors, "the shopkeepers of Paddepoel should be involved in the decision making and they should also be listened to"¹⁷. The bill for the traffic plan was placed on the agenda for the municipal council meeting on October 2nd. However, it was the 33rd

item, so it was almost certain that this bill would be postponed. Nevertheless, "about 200 businesspeople and residents from the neighbourhood Paddepoel" crowded in and around the council chamber on that day, with banners reading, "Paddepoel, no isolation cell". Although the bill was not dealt with, as expected, the delegate of the Shopkeepers' Association Paddepoel¹⁸ could see Wallage, and exact a promise from him that "the shopkeepers will be involved in working out the plan and the experts employed by them will obtain real influence" 19. Shopkeepers of the Shopping Centre Paddepoel, in cooperation with shopkeepers in Selwerd and Vinkhuizen, called out to residents for organising themselves into an "action committee", offering coordination among residents. In addition, they placed in almost every shop a petition opposing the plan, which residents could sign. According to "spokesman" of shopkeepers K.B. van Slochteren, at least 10,000 signatures had been collected in several days. Later, Van Loenen recollects that this whole campaign cost them " about 300,000 guilders"²⁰. Many businesspeople from the inner city also supported the campaign, urging the shopkeepers of Paddepoel "to resist those measures to the last ditch, if necessary also with legal means, in order to prevent disastrous effects of a drastic traffic plan"²¹.

The municipal council discussed the bill on October 16th. Although "hundreds of those interested" came, who "disagree with a plan to make through traffic in their neighbourhoods difficult", the council approved the budget to make a traffic plan for the northern neighbourhoods, with the support of left-wing parties. However, with every political party pressing for a "good participation", Wallage promised that residents would "obtain amply the opportunity to influence the further procedure" Facing this condition and fierce opposition, it must have been impossible to start planning immediately. After this bill being passed, traffic planning for the northern neighbourhoods had been, at least superficially, suspended for a while. The municipality had shifted priority to making a traffic plan for the whole city area, the so-called Plan Traffic and Transport, which was being prepared simultaneously.

3. The Discussion Plan Traffic and Transport

3.1 The original idea

The Nieuwsblad dated November 10th reported remarks of Wallage about this plan. According to him, a "draft" had already been prepared before the summer vacation. However, it included only the "principles and underlying philosophy", and was "too vague" for Wallage. He intended to expand this with "a great number of concrete plans and illustrations, through which councillors and participating citizens image much clearer where they stand". The "first discussion paper" would be published "early next year". After an "extensive participation with neighbourhoods and organisations concerned", the "decisive Plan Traffic and Transport" would be proposed to the municipal council, he says.

At the council meeting in December, he explained more clearly the aim of this plan. "Exclusively plans for making residential neighbourhoods car-limited are being made". As a reason for this, he quoted the fact that he had received as many as "73 requests from residents for incidental measures against a traffic nuisance" for the past year, and argued, "Each measure causes a nuisance again elsewhere", without "such a total vision". In addition, he emphasised, as in the above Nieuwsblad article, that the plan would include concrete measures, and that the public would have ample opportunity to participate:

In the Plan Traffic and Transport, we are not in search for principles or new rich thoughts. The point is to transform those principles that we have already developed for a traffic policy for the past years into a broad package of measures. (...) This total package will extensively be discussed with neighbourhoods concerned, and no partial plans will not be implemented any more before the total vision is prepared.²³

The Discussion Plan was scheduled to be published in February 1979, as the Nieuwsblad reported. However, because "the *college* needs more time to study the issue"²⁴, it was actually published in June.

3.2 Facilitate public transport and bicycles

In "Part I: Problems and Objectives", the Discussion Plan introduces the following "central objective for the traffic and transport policy":

The traffic and transport policy contributes to maintaining and improving cultural, social and economic facilities based on equality of transport users and within the spatial possibilities and limits that a compact city offers.²⁵

It quotes, as a "further elaboration" of this central objective, the following sentence from the policy plan 1979-1983 or Municipal Program 78-82:

The traffic and transport policy is aimed at realising the balance between individual desires for transport, (social) costs linked to it and traffic space available.²⁶

Subsequently, it lists more concrete objectives for the short term and long term:

For the short term, we will strive for these objectives through:

- facilitating (motor)bicycle traffic through designing a coherent network of bicycle facilities;
- facilitating the use of public transport through introducing facilities for good service;
- restraining traffic danger particularly for weak traffic participants;
- improving and realising a main road structure at the city level, through which a reasonable management of car traffic is guaranteed;
- redesigning living and working areas for good and safe working and living climate.

For the long term, we consider important:

- offering good and trustworthy public transport possibilities for "the transport poor" (experiments with public transport);
- orienting traffic planning (...) toward good and functioning public transport and (motor)bicycle facilities:
- a consistent public policy in terms of integrating living, working and shopping areas;
- a consistent public policy in terms of restraining negative environmental effects;
- enforcing the parking policy of controlling car traffic (...).²⁷

From these statements, we can clearly recognise that the B&W is trying to facilitate the use of bicycles and public transport. In "Part II: Plans and Measures", the Discussion Plan explains measures taken for these two modes. For bicycles, in chapter 6, it proposes two "systems" of bicycle paths. One consists of "main bicycle paths" which run along but are physically separated from roadways with heavy traffic. Another consists of "bicycle routes through traffic-limited areas" (Figure 3), which are rather aimed at offering "pleasant and quiet bicycle climate". On these routes, "The complaints about environment, such as exhaust gas, noise pollution and so on, can be heard to a far lesser extent" Concerning public transport, the recently formed Working Group Infrastructure Public Transport is studying measures for making bus traffic smooth, and its study will be continued, says the Discussion Plan in chapter 7. It proposes networks of lines for city busses and regional busses. For the former, it adds the "ring line" to the existing radial lines. It also advocates the park and ride system, and lists some candidate sites for it.

3.3 The main road network

On the other hand, for car traffic, the B&W seems to hold on to a restrictive policy at least in the Introduction:

If someone wants to pay extra attention to those traffic participants who themselves cannot use cars - and the *college* wants that -, then he has to take concrete measures for busses, bicycles and pedestrians, and sometimes say no when far-reaching measures for car traffic are concerned. (...) We do not propose the expansion of the space (existing traffic space - by the author), except for the construction of the ring roads.³¹

However, from the above listed objectives, we cannot recognise any clear intention of the B&W of restricting car-use, or more specifically, of limiting through traffic or making residential areas car-limited. It is difficult to find even those words like "through traffic", "car-limited" or "traffic-limited" through the whole plan. The above mentioned "bicycle routes through traffic-limited areas" are almost exceptional, although the meaning of "traffic-limited areas" is explained nowhere.

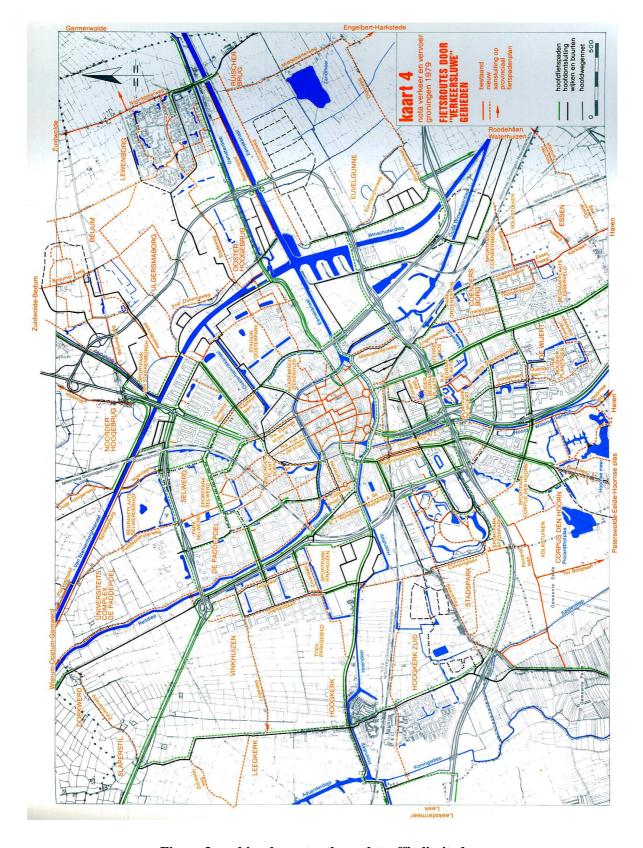


Figure 3: bicycle routes through traffic-limited areas

Chapter 4 in Part II deals with the "main road network"³² (Figure 4), which consists of the ring roads, Diepenring and "accessibility routes³³ that constitute the link between Diepenring and the ring roads"³⁴. The B&W seems to intend to concentrate through traffic on the ring roads and accessibility routes to relieve residential areas. However, it does not tell clearly such an intention. Concerning the ring roads, the Discussion Plan explains their role as follows:

Considering the fact that this urban motorways are constructed with high capacity and at high costs (about 400 million guilders, almost entirely subsidised by the national government), it is economically necessary that this system is used as well as possible. It is also socially desirable from the point of view of residential and living environment that some streets are relieved as quickly as possible of the amount of traffic for which they are not destined. Economic necessity and social desirability demands for stimulating the shift of car traffic toward the ring road system.³⁵

So, relieved of car traffic are just "some streets", not residential areas as a whole. "The adjustment of the urban road network is necessary for this", and the Discussion Plan urges the necessity of studying "some potential bottlenecks" on the southern ring road, which was in service in 1970.

Concerning the accessibility routes, we can only deduce the intention of the B&W from one sentence, saying, "The desirable effect of bundling car traffic on these roads (accessibility routes - by the author) can be achieved only when they acquire a design attractive to drivers" The Discussion Plan introduces following eight routes that were put forward in the past traffic plan as such.

- Emmaviaduct
- Hereweg
- Europaweg
- Damsterdiep
- Bedumerweg Rodeweg Gedempte Boterdiep
- Hoendiep/ A-weg
- Peizerweg
- Paterswoldseweg

Among these, the Discussion Plan argues that Peizerweg and Paterswoldseweg should be "reduced"³⁸ to the "main opening for the districts and neighbourhoods"³⁹, which is explained later, because Peizerweg runs through an "intensive residential building" and, concerning Paterswoldseweg, there are "better alternatives for drivers"⁴⁰. On the other hand, it keeps Bedumerweg - Rodeweg - Gedempte Boterdiep as an accessibility route, although this route necessitates a "thorough reconstruction"⁴¹ of, particularly, Rodeweg. As a result, there remain six accessibility routes in total. However, each of these routes are not worked out at all. Except for "some potential bottlenecks", "For the ring road system, its design, finance and sequence of implementation is fixed. This is not the case with the accessibility routes"⁴², the Discussion Plan concedes. All we can know is that those routes would "acquire a design attractive to drivers".

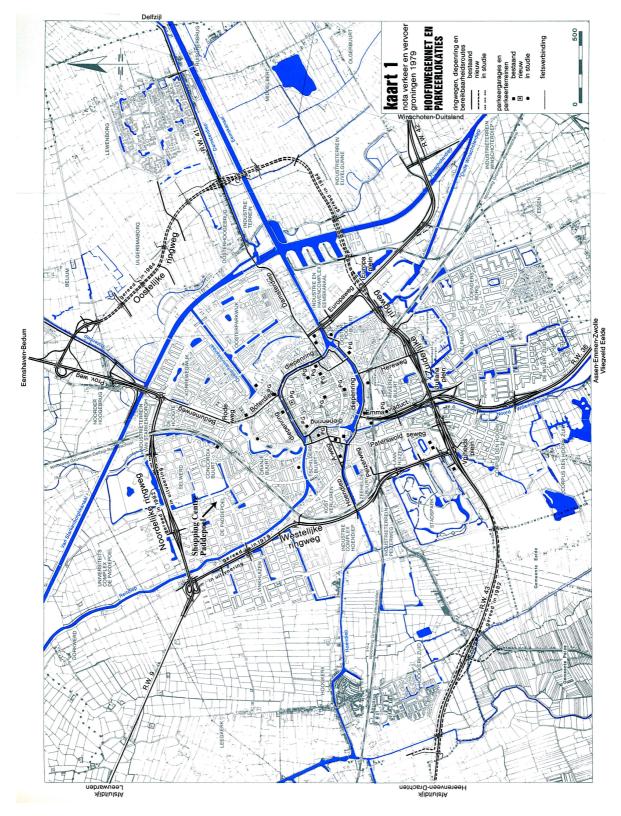


Figure 4: the main road network

(The location of the Shopping Centre Paddepoel is added by the author.)

3.4 "Fall out of current main structure"

Although even the main road network is not clearly defined, the "main opening for the districts and neighbourhoods" (Figure 5), which is the title of chapter 5, is furthermore unclear. We can <u>presume</u> that this type of roads is ranked lower, in terms of traffic function, than the main road network. However, the Discussion Plan does not mention at all its function or profile. We cannot know even whether this type can accept through traffic or not. Necessarily, the plan does not mention at all a principle based on which this type should be placed over the whole city area. It just explains generally the street pattern in an extremely simplistic and textbookish way, and, about Groningen, just describes the current street pattern very simply and only refers to very general points to bear in mind:

There are in fact two views, opposing in principle, on the opening pattern for districts and neighbourhoods, that is, a "tree structure" and "lattice structure". (...)

When we see the road structure in Groningen with this brief piece of theory, it is clear that the lattice idea has dominated here also, but that we can recognise an obvious influence of the tree structure in the more recent plans (Beijum, Lewenborg, de Wijert-zuid, Corpus den Hoorn-zuid).

The discussion over restructuring traffic within the districts and neighbourhoods (in other words: over the "orientation of the lattices") will, in the framework of this plan, involve the main principles:

- peripheral and/or central opening;
- hierarchical or non-hierarchical;
- the number of possible alternatives of routes.

In addition, we must take into account the wishes for public transport, bicycles and pedestrians.⁴³

Adding ambiguity furthermore is the wavy lines in "*kaart* 2" (Figure 5), which are defined as "fall out of current main structure" in the legend. The problem is whether this "main structure" means 1) the main road network, or 2) the main opening for the districts and neighbourhoods or both the main road network and main opening, as a result, falling out of the main opening. The Discussion Plan does not define the meaning of this "main structure" anywhere, while it uses both the word "main road structure" and the word "main opening structure" in the text. However, dependent on which interpretation we accept, as a matter of course, the meaning of *kaart* 2 differs considerably. Based on the interpretation 1), those roads with the wavy lines could remain the main opening. Actually, according to section 3 in chapter 5, which explains the main opening for each neighbourhood, some roads are "taken from the main opening" while other roads are "taken from the main structure". For the latter roads, those measures to restrain car traffic could not be so thorough as for the former roads.

However, if we accept this interpretation, we face some inconsistencies. As mentioned earlier, Peizerweg, which had been regarded as an accessibility route, that is, a part of the main road network, was reduced to the main opening in this plan. Nevertheless, this road is described with the solid line in *kaart* 2, while Paterswoldseweg, which was likewise taken from the main road network and designated as a main opening, is described with the wavy line. Concerning this inconsistency, we can explain that, because Peizerweg actually functioned as a main opening, and was reduced just

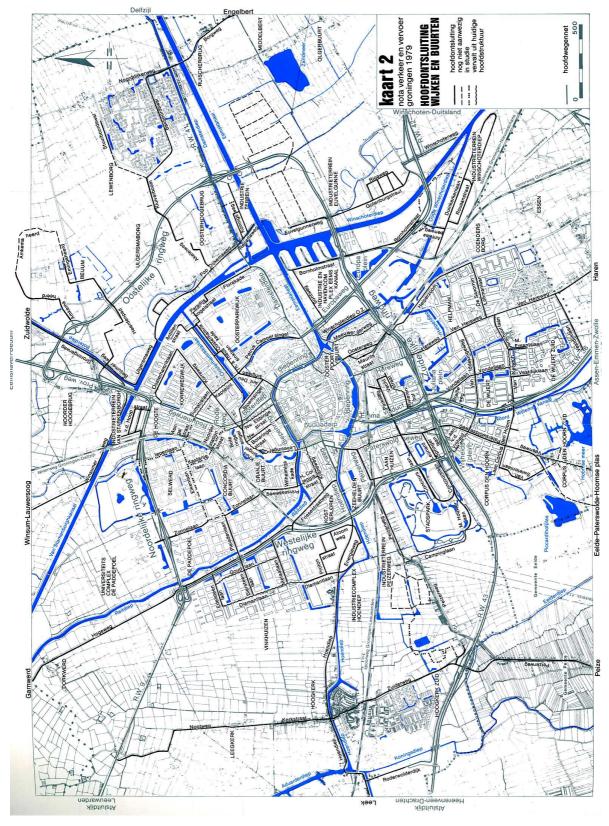


Figure 5: the main opening for the districts and neighbourhoods

formally to the main opening, it is not drawn with the wavy line. However, there is a more serious inconsistency. A section with the wavy line falls out of the main structure, that is, the main road network, if based on the interpretation 1). This means that that section currently functions as a part of the main road network. As long as that section functions as such, those sections on the extension of that section ought to function also as a part of the main road network. Therefore, if the Discussion Plan designates those sections on the extension as the main opening, this means that those sections are also fallen out of the main road network. Although there are indeed many those sections, as we can recognise in *kaart* 2, they are drawn with the solid lines. That is why, we should accept the interpretation 2). On some occasions the authors of this plan use the phrase "taken from the main opening", and on others the phrase "taken from the main structure", not intentionally but just capriciously. Concerning Paterswoldseweg, not because it falls out of the main road network, but because the northern section of the road falls out of even the main opening, as mentioned later, that section is drawn with the wavy line.

There still remains ambiguity with the wavy lines, although this ambiguity is inevitable, because the main opening itself is not clearly defined. The Discussion Plan hardly explains, when a section falls out of or is taken from the main opening, how its profile or traffic regulations could or should change in terms of car traffic. For example, it proposes the following idea for the shopping street, Meeuwerderweg:

Meeuwerderweg is taken from the main opening in this plan and will fulfil the function as a neighbourhood opening road. This opens the possibility to let this street better function as a residential and shopping street, which can be expressed in the design.⁴⁹

It tells nothing about how the "possibility" "can be expressed in the design", and again introduces a concept, a "neighbourhood opening road" without defining it. The section of Paterswoldseweg between Parkweg and Peizerweg is "taken from the main structure". "This section, however, continues to function as an opening road for both Grunobuurt and Laanhuizen" says the Discussion Plan. We cannot know whether this "opening road" means the above "neighbourhood opening road", and, whatever it is, what this statement means concretely. For most of other wavy sections, the Discussion Plan just says that they are taken from the main structure or opening. The only exception to this is related to Noorderplantsoen, where "Leliesingel and Kruissingel will be taken from the car structure in this concept and designed as a bicycle path" Also in chapter 6, which deals with bicycles, the plan clearly states that the "bicycle path in the Noorderplantsoen" "emerges after making the road through Noorderplantsoen car-free" **

Finally, some of the roads in the northern neighbourhoods, where there was an opposition campaign against a traffic plan, are drawn with the dotted lines, which mean "in study". The original objective of the Plan Traffic and Transport was to keep through traffic out of residential areas. However, the Discussion Plan does not even mention this objective, and, far from including "a great number of concrete plans and

illustrations", it proposes very few substantially. Moreover, it is a planning document that is very difficult to understand.

3.5 Inspraak, not yet participatie

Watered down was not only the content, but also the process. The Discussion Plan distinguishes between "*inspraak*" and "*participatie*". The former is to "give general and specific reactions to a policy document", while the latter is to "participate actively in the policy process". The "consultation over plans for the urban basic structure", like this plan, has an "*inspraak* character"⁵⁴, and it explains the succeeding procedure as follows:

we want to have reactions from as many groups and individuals as possible. After studying these reactions and reconsidering the original choices, we present our final proposal to the council.⁵⁵

To be concrete, as opportunities for *inspraak*, the B&W arranges three public hearings and accepts written opinions for half a year. According to its schedule, "after about half a year", it submits a "package with main lines" to the council. If this is approved, then the "development of traffic plans per neighbourhood" starts through "*participatieproces*" the Discussion Plan explains. However, Wallage stated at the beginning that this Discussion Plan itself would "extensively be discussed with neighbourhoods concerned".

The public hearings were held on September 25th, October 3rd and 10th. Wallage explained the plan briefly at the start of those hearings. He frankly introduces the original aim of the plan, that is, "managing traffic beyond neighbourhoods on a limited number of roads"⁵⁸ and "making neighbourhoods traffic-limited"⁵⁹. He also clarifies the meaning of the phrase "fall out of current main structure", saying, "The wavy lines in *kaart* 2 show road sections that will lose their main opening function in the future"⁶⁰. However, his account itself includes ambiguities. For example, he says, "Between the main routes⁶¹, there emerges the space necessary for making traffic-limited and for bicycles and busses"⁶². It is unclear whether he means, by the "main routes", the main road network or main opening. If he means the former, rather large traffic-limited areas could emerge. As to the effect of the wavy lines, he explains as follows:

If the municipality plans to take a street out of the main opening, the implementation and the extent is still subject to discussion; it can vary between complete closure and a minor restraint to keep unnecessary traffic out of the neighbourhood.⁶³

That is why, these wavy lines can mean both a pedestrian street and a street with a single smooth traffic hump, although these streets have utterly different traffic function and effect.

4. Reactions to the Discussion Plan

4.1 The environmental camp

In response to the Discussion Plan, the ENFB, ROVER and working groups within the left-wing PSP and PPR submitted to the B&W separately long written opinions, all of which criticised this plan for deviating from the "good direction" in which the "first step"⁶⁴ was taken with the VCP, and expressed a disappointment.

According to them, the B&W has an "apparent anxiety"⁶⁵ about taking measures to restrain car traffic. Although the B&W shows a restrictive attitude toward cars at least in the Introduction, they do not appreciate this, because it "sometimes", that is, not always, "say no", or this has already been decided, so unnecessary to mention in this plan. Paterswoldseweg and Peizerweg are reduced to the main opening, while *kaart* 2 shows the wavy lines, where roads "fall out of current main structure". They do not even mention these measures whose actual effect on the road profile is unclear.

They rather regard the Discussion Plan as vigorously promoting facilities for cars, based on the fact that "400 million guilders" are spent on the ring roads, or the statement about the accessibility routes, "The desirable effect of bundling car traffic on these roads can be achieved only when they acquire a design attractive to drivers". For them, the main opening, which the B&W plans "to optimally adjust to the requirements of car traffic" is also for through traffic, although the Discussion Plan does not define this type of roads at all.

Indeed, the Discussion Plan refers to measures for bicycles and busses as well as cars. However, according to them, those measures for bicycles and busses are not sufficiently worked out, and not implemented in the short term, presenting a striking contrast to measures for cars. Moreover, they insist that we cannot promote both facilities for bicycles and busses, and facilities for cars. If we can drive comfortably, then we use cars, even if good facilities for bicycles and busses are available. Or, simply, there is no space on the road to provide good facilities for all these vehicles, they argue. Although "the college tries to avoid every real choice frenetically over 60 pages"⁶⁷, not being "opted against the car" means, after all, being "opted for the car"⁶⁸. Therefore, we should keep through traffic out of residential areas, not through providing attractive roads for cars, but through "making it impossible or very unattractive for drivers to use particular routes"69. For this, measures such as "cutting"⁷⁰, "closing"⁷¹ or one-way traffic are urged. Cutting or closing roads against car traffic should be enforced or studied for Damsterdiep, Sumatralaan, Eikenlaan or (the tunnel of) Asingastraat. In addition, the ROVER puts forward the idea of transforming Zonnelaan, in front of the Shopping Centre Paddepoel, into a "winkelerf" with a "mini bus-station". The ENFB concludes that "there seems to be so lacking the political will of the *college* to continue a really progressive traffic policy", and demands the B&W to return to its own political principles:

We do not say that the *college* wants to dismantle the policy started by the former *college*, but, whether intentionally or not, the effect of the policy proposed now will come down to that. The *college* seems to stand still hesitantly, and look around itself to the left, but particularly to the right. We hope that it remembers that one must still again look to the left finally.⁷³

A little bit later, in February 1980, the working group Traffic⁷⁴ within the PvdA published a "memorandum" ⁷⁵ about the Discussion Plan, expressing a disappointment like the above groups. According to this, "we, as socialists, strive for more equitable society", and this means, in a traffic policy, that "the redistribution of the existing traffic space is necessary in favour of public transport and slow traffic and at the cost of car traffic". However, in the Discussion Plan, these "basic principles" are "not consistently enough worked out", it regrets. Subsequently, it reconfirms the background and objectives for the plan, which had been orally mentioned, but were not written in the plan. That is, the "direct reason" for preparing this plan was, first of all, "the nuisance that many residential neighbourhoods have from intensive through traffic". The objectives are not only to facilitate the use of bicycles and busses, but also to restrain car traffic, and car traffic can be restrained through, first of all, "taking measures aimed at making residential neighbourhoods traffic-limited, for example through one-way streets, redesigning, woonerven, etc". In addition, the memorandum defines the accessibility routes or main opening, whose function and profile are left vague in the Discussion Plan. The accessibility routes "form the urban network of main traffic arteries", while the "main opening roads" "must ensure that all parts of the city are connected to the main arteries". Concerning the road profile, although the ring roads are provided with 4 lanes in both directions, "Accessibility routes must, in principle, remain limited to 2 lanes". "Main opening roads must have 2 lanes at most (3.50 m each), limited crossing areas (less left or right-hand lanes) and separate bicycle paths or bicycle lanes". Enclosed with these roads, "Traffic-limited areas are designed, where desirable, as woonerf or "winkelerf", and characterised furthermore with a lot of green, street furniture and clinkers in place of asphalt".

The memorandum, like the ENFB and others, argues that the use of the ring roads should be facilitated, "not through giving the ring roads an ideal implementation, but through making it very unattractive or impossible not to use them", arranging the main opening roads or traffic-limited areas as defined above. On the other hand, it finds it "almost inevitable" to make Rodeweg a part of the accessibility route, as the Discussion Plan prescribes, considering "the wish to relieve Sumatralaan and give Nw. Ebbingestraat a function for shopping and bus and bicycle traffic". Comments or criticisms concerning measures for bicycles and busses are almost the same as those put forward by the ENFB and others. Particularly, it also argues for making Zonnelaan in front of the shopping centre a "winkelerf".

4.2 The business camp

Contrary to the above groups, businesspeople or their organisations regarded the Discussion Plan as causing inconvenience to drivers, and strongly opposed it at public

hearings or through written opinions, which they submitted in large amounts. Because the plan's content was unclear, they variously understood the extent to which cars would be made inconvenient. However, citing the alleged negative effect of the VCP, they unanimously insisted that this plan would cause a serious decline in sales, and more far-reaching effects, such as "the deterioration of the inner city, further emigration of the businesses from the city and a decrease in employment in the city"⁷⁶.

For example, some written opinions focus on the wavy lines in *kaart* 2, which the ENFB and others do not even mention, and assume that roads are closed against cars here:

Through the Association of Merchants, I acquired *kaart nr.* 2 of the Plan Traffic and Transport Groningen 1979. From this, it has become clear to me that various main roads would be blocked. I have serous objections against literally all of these changes (the roads marked with a wavy line in the *kaart*). (...) As a real estate agent, my co-workers and I drive through the city every day and use regularly all these roads. That is why, I have recognised these very far-reaching changes with surprise and protest seriously against introduction. (...) (Real Estate Agency Zeeven)⁷⁷

Another written opinion focuses on *kaart* 4 (Figure 3), which shows "bicycle routes through traffic-limited areas". Because these routes are planned all over the city, this opinion assumes that the whole city area would be made car-limited:

We have the impression that "traffic-limited" means "car-limited". Indeed in *kaart* 4, bicycle routes are planned, if they are not yet provided. We see this phenomenon in the *kaart* in the whole city, so that we must assume that the whole city must become "car-limited". We express a serious objection against this effort. It is in conflict with the interests of our branch. We expect with this a serious loss in jobs and businesses in the city. (...)

The results of the measures in the plan will be an escape of the business from the city, and will make Groningen a dead city. We will continue to challenge these measures, and resist their implementation to the last ditch. (BOVAG)⁷⁸

More boldly, shopkeepers of the Shopping Centre Paddepoel, around which roads are "in study" in the plan, jumped to the conclusion that this plan was a citywide version of the VCP. With this plan, according to them, "sector boundaries" would be established between neighbourhoods, and drivers have to go out to the ring roads to move between neighbourhoods:

This thinking is materialised in a system of traffic management in which it suffices to make neighbourhoods accessible for car traffic, sector by sector, from the ring roads. Through car traffic between the neighbourhoods has to be excluded, and in the neighbourhoods themselves, at the cost of car traffic, priority has to be granted to pedestrians, (motor)bicycles and public transport. They will also be the only categories that will be able to cross the sector boundaries without using the ring roads. For car traffic, all these mean that one must always make a detour to move from one sector to another; first out of one sector and on the ring road, and subsequently from the ring road into another sector. (...)

In this context, it goes without saying that, if such a plan of traffic management would be considered also in the northern neighbourhoods, the Association regards it as a substantial threat for the good function of the Shopping Centrum the Paddepoel and strongly resists it. (...) (Cooperative Association of Owners in the Shopping Centrum The Paddepoel)⁷⁹

However, most of businesspeople or their organisations just vaguely supposed that the

plan would make car traffic, at least, more inconvenient than now, based on the phrase "fall out of current main structure" given to the wavy lines or the prejudice that traffic plans, particularly those made by the left-wing B&W, were necessarily hostile to drivers. That is why, they did not mention concretely how the plan would make car traffic inconvenient, but still insisted that the plan included "thorough measures" against cars, and would have serious effects on business. The following are such examples of written opinions:

After carefully studying the Discussion Plan Traffic and Transport of the Municipality of Groningen, we have come to the conclusion that the plan is as disastrous for the inner city of Groningen as the detestable *Verkeerscirculatieplan*. (...) (Shopkeepers' Association Folkingestraat)⁸⁰

As a result of the VCP, a number of businesses have been meanwhile given up, and others have seen their results of business decline. Also judging from the experience with the VCP, some of the traffic measures proposed in the plan will result in further degradation of businesses, through which some of jobs are also jeopardised. (...) (Businesspeople's Association Zuiderdiep)⁸¹

At the same time, we want to point out to the *college* that traffic via Meeuwerderweg, both in and beyond the neighbourhood, must not be hindered in any way. (...) For the vast majority of these businesses, their business would be jeopardised, if their accessibility, particularly for the consumers outside the neighbourhood, decreases. (...) (Shopkeepers' Association Koopcentrum-Oosterpoort)⁸²

With this, we make an objection against the traffic measures, which were included in the Discussion Plan Traffic and Transport.

Reasons:

Because our business does not remain well directly accessible for our clients, and, as a result, our clients must make a detour or turn to other businesses that are well accessible in other cities.

We find that the Discussion Plan Traffic and Transport does not recognise the interests of the business world.

We then also establish explicitly that the responsibility for the employment lies with the Municipality of Groningen. (Rozenberg Printing Ltd.)⁸³

Although we regard the Plan Traffic and Transport as almost entirely of qualitative nature, it still proposes, in our view, a significant number of changes, which, if realised, would cause insoluble problems for our business. Indeed, ANY CLOSING, NARROWING ETC. OF THE EXISTING NETWORK OF ROADS AND STREETS IN THE MUNICIPALITY OF GRONINGEN MEANS AS MUCH HINDRANCE FOR CARRING OUT OUR BUSINESS! (...) (H. Nijdam Ltd.)⁸⁴

While the ENFB criticised the B&W for lacking the political will, businesspeople or their organisations criticised it for being motivated by (party-)politics, and demanded to make the plan in a "businesslike" way. To be concrete, they insisted that, if the ring roads were in service, a "remarkable relief of traffic pressure" could be expected for the area enclosed with the ring roads. For example, "When the eastern ring road comes into service, through traffic would not use any more the route Petrus Campersingel, Kapteynlaan, Sumatralaan, and Bedumerweg". As a result, "The remaining traffic at the neighbourhood level will not justify any more such an interference as the closure of Kapteynlaan and Sumatralaan", both of which are marked with the wavy lines in *kaart* 2. Or, "After the northern ring road coming into service, through traffic will disappear from Leliesingel and Kruissingel". So, "it will not be necessary any more to close these routes against inter-neighbourhood traffic" Therefore, they argued, it is "premature"

to make a plan now. The municipality should, first of all, complete the ring roads. After "more data are collected over the (expected) effects of the ring road system on the traffic situation"⁸⁸, if it were still found to be necessary to make a traffic plan, then the municipality should make it, they insisted.

Although planning was suspended for the area around the Shopping Centre Paddepoel, its shopkeepers also demanded to suspend the whole planning. Because, when those "principles", which were misunderstood by them as the VCP at the city level, "were adopted in the rest of the city, it would be clearly impossible to still discuss those principles in the area that is now in study" later. They attended the public hearing on October 10th, and called out for opposing the plan with pamphlets. On the other hand, they insisted that Eikenlaan, Zonnelaan, Dierenriemstraat and Pleiadenlaan, all of which are "in study" in the plan, should be designated as the main opening. Particularly concerning Eikenlaan and Pleiadenlaan, where roadways were narrowed a short time ago to make room for bicycle paths or a bus lane, they urged the B&W to restore their original profile.

Businesspeople or their organisations were also dissatisfied with the opportunities for participation. They insisted that public hearings, which citizens as a whole could attend, were not suitable for discussing problems around businesses, and demanded to arrange separate meetings where the municipality should talk with individual businesses. Furthermore, the KNOV argued that the "decision" of a traffic plan, if such a plan turned out to be necessary after the ring roads being completed, must be made "in consultation with the business world". In addition, not only proposals themselves, but also "models of study" on traffic and their "results" must be consulted with the business world. Judging from these statements, what they called "businesslike" seems to mean, not "objective" or "professional", but "based on the interests of businesses", which, of course, involves political judgement.

4.3 Residents

While the environmental camp and business camp expressed strong dissatisfaction with the Discussion Plan from the utterly opposite point of view, residents or their organisations responded variously dependent on proposed measures related to their neighbourhoods. However, underlying their responses is the common desire to keep through traffic out of their neighbourhoods.

For example, the plan stated clearly that the roads through Noorderplantsoen should be made car-free, and bicycle paths should be built there. The Neighbourhood Committees of Noorderplantsoen West and East eagerly welcomed this measure in their written opinion, saying, "We do not want to fail to compliment on making Leliesingel, from Boteringestraat to the bridge, car-free. We are very happy with it"⁹¹. Also at the public hearing on October 3rd, "great assent"⁹² to this measure was voiced by some residents.

In Korrewegwijk and Vinkhuizen, some streets are drawn with the wavy lines in the plan, without any specifications. Residents' organisations there supported basically this plan, but asked for specifying it:

Korrewegbuurt and Indischebuurt is a residential neighbourhood, which has been traversed with important traffic arteries, such as Kapteynlaan, Sumatralaan and Korreweg. We can say that, because of the location, there are still numerous so-called shortcuts in the neighbourhood. The fact that has been looked at with great concern by many street and neighbourhood committees in the past years, and that has also often been placed on their programmes as action points.

It might then also be clear that the Plan Traffic and Transport has been looked forward to with great interest in Indischebuurt and Korrewegbuurt. In this first reaction, we can say that there is a certain degree of endorsement of the broad lines such as proposed for Indischebuurt and Korrewegbuurt in the plan. (...) Finally, we want to say that, in our view, concrete plans must be made as soon as possible. (...) (Consultative Body Korrewegwijk)⁹³

A short report of the meeting of neighbourhood residents of Vinkhuizen, who are interested in traffic. (...)

Concerning Diamantlaan and Goudlaan, the plan prescribes that they should be taken from the main structure. Those present endorse this, but:

what kind of concrete measures does the municipality think to take? (narrowing, closing, twists?) (...) (Community Work Vinkhuizen)⁹⁴

The residents around Nieuwe Boteringestraat, which is designated as the main opening in the plan, asked the municipality to take a "consistent whole of measures", such as "marking the crossings better, restraining the speed of through traffic" and so on, and "to plant trees at regular and not so great distance". However, they say, in the written opinion, that they could not understand to what extent the plan would meet these "principles", because "the plan tells nothing about the necessary width and profile of main opening roads" ⁹⁵.

There are some streets for which residents demanded the municipality to introduce more thorough measures against car traffic than proposed in the plan. For example, residents around Asingastraat, whose function is "in study" in the plan, wanted the street to be drawn with the wavy line, while residents around Oosterhamriklaan, which is designated as the main opening, asked for placing a "snip" there:

If you want to substantiate one neighbourhood, de Hoogte, in the future, then this means that Asingastraat, like Sumatralaan, will have to disappear from the main road network. You will be able to assign only a neighbourhood opening function to Asingastraat. (...)

Asingastraat is a racetrack; crossing children, pedestrians and bicycles must behave like "quick crossing game" to come to the other side safely. (...) (Neighbourhood Committee de Hoogte and Neighbourhood Consultation Bedumerstraat)⁹⁷

Oosterhamriklaan threatens to become a shortcut to go quickly from Bedumerweg to Korreweg. (...)

Oosterhamriklaan runs along Molukkenplantsoen, which is completely refurbished. Many children will also play there. There are also schools and an old people's complex in Molukkenpark. (...)

You can, in our view, put an end to this unsafe situation in an inexpensive way, that is, through placing a snip at Edah next to the crossing with Surinamestraat. If that section of Oosterhamriklaan is closed for through car traffic with poles, sleepers and the like, all problems will be solved, we think. (District Association West-Indische Buurt)⁹⁸

On the other hand, the accessibility routes in the plan caused anxiety about an increase of car traffic among surrounding residents. Particularly, residents around Rodeweg strongly opposed the proposal of integrating Rodeweg into the accessibility route. They attended public hearings, and submitted written opinions not only as a residents' organisation but also individually in a large amount. By the same token, residents around Bedumerweg demanded to rather reduce the current four lanes to two lanes, and those around Hoendiepskade demanded to make it one-way for car traffic, except for bus traffic.

So, it was indeed one of "political principles", as alleged by business organisations, to keep through traffic out of residential areas, but this principle was based on desires widely shared among residents. Although a resident along Peizerweg raised objections against "closing" Paterswoldseweg, and residents along Pleiadenlaan against the possibility that "Zonnelaan does not become a main opening for through traffic "100, these objections also originated from the fear that through traffic could shift to their roads.

4.4 "Big stillness"

In response to the Discussion Plan, 143 written opinions in total had been lodged with the B&W by November 1979. In February 1980, the municipality published a report with more than 450 pages, Reactions to Discussion Plan Traffic and Transport, which included those written opinions and the minutes of three public hearings. According to the introduction in the name of the B&W, "We are now engaged in a careful study" of these opinions, and, "considering the quality and quantity of the reactions, this will require more time than we thought at the beginning". Nevertheless, the B&W states here that it will present a definitive plan, which takes into account these reactions, to the municipal council "this spring" 101.

However, this report had been followed by "big stillness" around this plan. At the council committee Traffic and Transport in October 1980, Wallage was criticised by councillors for the delay of various traffic plans, such as this or the modification of the VCP. Concerning this plan, he explained, "we have received so many suggestions, all of which we want to integrate into the Plan Traffic and Transport, that this also has caused a delay". Although he defended, "we cannot work harder" the plan had thereafter again hardly been reported in the Nieuwsblad. In April 1981, Wallage resigned *wethouder*, Rein Zunderdorp succeeded it, but stillness continued. In the local party bulletin of the PvdA, Onze Binding, in November 1981, the division executive lists some projects that have not been sufficiently carried out in terms of the Municipal Programme 78-82. One of them is a "traffic plan at the city level", and "the Plan Traffic and Transport is not yet decided", it points out. Finally in September 1982, that is, more than three years after the Discussion Plan was published, Zunderdorp, in a sense abruptly, presented the Definitive Plan Traffic and Transport.

5. The Definitive Plan

5.1 Regulations for subsidies

At the beginning of the plan, the B&W cites very generally, as the main reasons for the delay, "the overestimation of the capacity available and the underestimation of the results of publishing such a plan" 104. Subsequently, in "Chapter I: How to go farther from now", the plan explains the new regulations 105 related to national subsidies for traffic facilities. These regulations were decided by the Minister of Transport and Public Works in August 1981. According to the plan, these new regulations prescribe, much more precisely than before, the content and procedures for public participation for a "traffic circulation plan", which is a traffic plan at the city level and a municipality has to submit to the national government to receive subsidies. Although the Discussion Plan does not meet these prescriptions, the plan says, it would be accepted as a traffic circulation plan based on "transitional provisions", if it is decided by December 1982. It also gives an overview of the Discussion Plan, and summarises reactions to it. However, the most important part, that is, the proposal about traffic measures is limited to one section, "2.3. Discussion about Chapters 4 to 8 of the Discussion Plan Traffic and Transport", or just 9 pages (22-30) in 36 pages of text. As many as three years being spent, this volume is surprising, but its content is more surprising.

5.2 "Misunderstanding"

In this section, the Definitive Plan, first of all, argues that "considerable confusion" has arisen over concepts introduced in the Discussion Plan, such as "main opening (for - by the author) districts and neighbourhoods, accessibility routes, taking from the main structure" and so on. It is therefore "advisable to clearly formulate" these concepts. As the first step for that, the plan confirms, "The Discussion Plan Traffic and Transport tried to, among others, fix a coarse-mesh system of traffic and transport facilities beyond neighbourhoods ¹⁰⁶", and it names this system the "main traffic structure" ¹⁰⁷. This main traffic structure consists of the "main car structure", "main bicycle structure" and "main bus structure" ¹⁰⁸, based on its definition. In addition, the Definitive Plan states, "the main opening districts and neighbourhoods, which was described in *kaart* 2 of the Discussion Plan Traffic and Transport, does not belong to the main traffic structure". That is why, the "main road network" in the Discussion Plan has changed its name to the "main car structure".

Subsequently, the Definitive Plan refers to the phrase "fall out of current main structure" or "taken from the main structure", which was one of sources of objections from the business community. The crucial point here is that this "main structure" was the main opening or both the main road network and main opening, as Wallage himself clarified, and is not the "main car structure" as defined in the Definitive Plan. Without adverting to this at all, the Definitive Plan argues that this phrase or the wavy line has caused a "misunderstanding" with many:

With regard to the "taking from the main structure", the following must be mentioned. Many people have adhered to the view that it is intended to "cut" the roads with this phrasing. Those roads drawn with the wavy lines in *kaart* 2 of the Discussion Plan Traffic and Transport would mean that through traffic must be made physically impossible in the future. The authors of the plan did not intend so.

However, there is no explanation about what was actually intended. The Definitive Plan includes, in the Appendix IV, a summary of every written opinion and a "short comment" on each opinion. On opinions expressing anxiety or objections against the wavy lines, comments just repeat that they do not mean closing the roads, and what actually happens with those roads depends on the "study and discussion through the approach at the neighbourhood level¹⁰⁹", again without telling what those wavy lines in fact meant. While the Definitive Plan does not tell a correct understanding, it argues that "it is now better to choose a somewhat different approach to avoid that misunderstanding", and explains as follows:

If a street that currently accommodates much car traffic is not indicated as a part of the main car structure, that street is not considered essential for managing car traffic beyond neighbourhoods ¹¹⁰. In consultation with the neighbourhood, such a street can lose its function for car traffic beyond neighbourhoods through more or less far-reaching measures in the framework of a neighbourhood traffic plan. Therefore, whether such generally thorough measures are taken depends on:

- the wishes of residents and businesspeople from the neighbourhood concerned;
- the possibilities to realise an acceptable traffic situation;
- the question whether a traffic plan is made for the neighbourhood concerned;
- the decision-making in the council for that traffic plan.

If we accept this argument, then it is, first of all, impossible to present a traffic plan for the whole city area until traffic plans at the neighbourhood level are decided. Because there are many streets that "currently accommodate much car traffic", and are "not indicated as a part of the main car structure" in the city. All those streets, according to this argument, can lose their function for car traffic beyond neighbourhoods dependent on the wishes of neighbourhood residents and businesspeople. In other words, all those streets can also maintain such a function. That is why, as the Discussion Plan itself states, "Because of all these uncertain factors, it is meaningless to fix already now that particular streets (...) must carry out no function for through car traffic". Nevertheless, this plan does present a map (Figure 6) of the main car structure and "neighbourhood opening roads"¹¹¹, to which the Definitive Plan has changed the name of the main opening for the districts and neighbourhoods "to avoid confusion". Based on the above argument, any streets, as long as they "currently accommodate much car traffic", can be added to the main car structure or neighbourhood opening roads in this map. So, this map does not have any significance as a plan map. In addition, concerning the renamed neighbourhood opening roads, their function is still vague, with only such an description that they "are used for opening the neighbourhood", and their profile, which the working group of the PvdA asked for clarifying, is not mentioned at all.

Furthermore, based on the above argument, and following the sentence, "Because of all these uncertain factors (...)", it argues, "Then, the notorious wavy lines are not

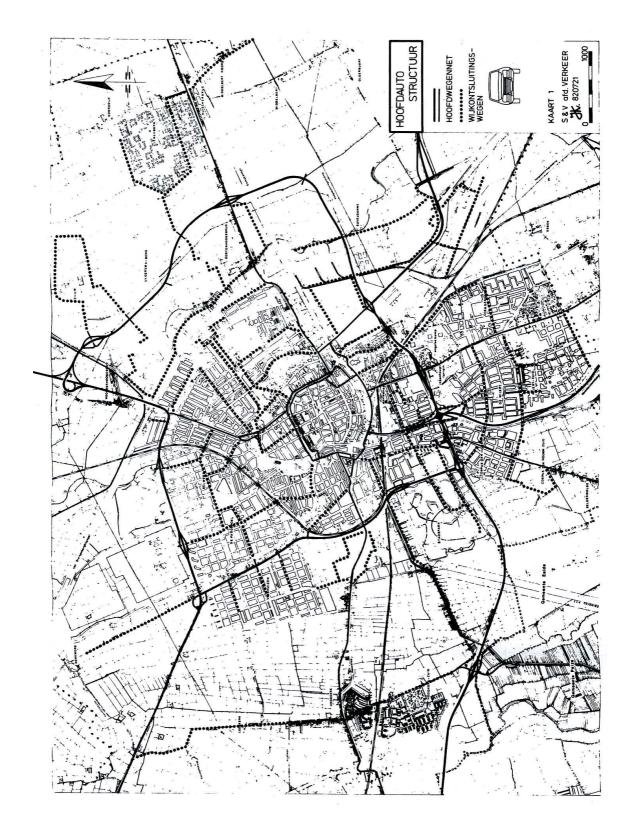


Figure 6: the main car structure and neighbourhood opening roads

included any more in the maps belonging to this plan", and, as can be seen in Figure 6, has erased all those wavy lines, which were welcomed by neighbourhood residents. However, this argument is, so to speak, a reason why a street that falls out of the <u>main car structure</u> is not fixed now. To justify erasing the wavy lines, the plan must tell why a street that falls out of <u>the main opening (neighbourhood opening roads)</u> is not fixed. As mentioned earlier, although the Definitive Plan introduces words such as "main traffic structure" or "main car structure" that can only add to confusion in relation to the Discussion Plan, it does not caution readers at all. Judging from these facts, the authors of the Definitive Plan themselves must have misunderstood the phrase "fall out of main structure" as "fall out of the main road network (the main car structure)".

Then, how are those roads with wavy lines, which were erased for an unaccountable reason, drawn in the Definitive Plan? Those roads, such as Paterswoldseweg or Meeuwerderweg, whose wavy lines caused strong objections from businesspeople are designated as the neighbourhood opening roads. Although this is clearly a conciliatory approach for car traffic in comparison with the Discussion Plan, there is no explanation for this. Particularly concerning Paterswoldseweg, although it concretely cites alternative routes and says, "The part of Paterswoldseweg between Parkweg and Peizerweg will not need to carry out even the neighbourhood opening function", the part is still designated as such in the map. In addition, because these are roads that "currently accommodate much car traffic" and are "not indicated as a part of the main car structure", they can maintain the function of not only the neighbourhood opening but also car traffic beyond neighbourhoods, dependent on the wishes of residents and businesspeople there. On the other hand, there are some roads whose wavy lines were erased and are just left white, such as Leliesingel and Kruissingel in Noorderplantsoen or Nieuwe Ebbingestraat. These are also roads that "currently accommodate (...) ", so they can keep on accepting car traffic beyond neighbourhoods.

5.3 An empty plan

After solving (?) problems around the wavy lines in this manner, the Definitive Plan turns to a "second correction", which is related to measures for bicycles. It insists that the "dichotomy between main bicycle paths and bicycle routes through traffic-limited areas" is insufficient, because "neither of these systems formed a closed system in themselves". However, the Discussion Plan intended that "these two bicycle networks complement and strengthen each other" and therefore included not only a map (*kaart* 3 and 4) for each of these systems but also a map (*kaart* 5) with both of systems to show their complementary relationship. The Definitive Plan does not explain why such a complementary system is not sufficient, and why each of systems must be self-sufficient. While it keeps the concepts, "car-limited bicycle routes" and "bicycle facilities along car routes" it includes only a map of the "main bicycle structure" (Figure 7) that shows these two without distinction. As a result, it is impossible any more to specify the places of "bicycle routes through traffic-limited areas", for which the Discussion Plan indicated measures to restrain car traffic. In addition, this map does



Figure 7: the main bicycle structure

not draw a distinction between "existing" and "new" routes, which was drawn in the Discussion Plan, and obscures the plan's intentions furthermore.

The ENFB and others pressed the B&W to choose between bicycles and public transport on one hand and cars on the other. However, the Definitive Plan makes a definite statement that "three elements of the main traffic structure (car structure, bus structure, bicycle structure) are regarded as equal". It concedes the difficulty in realising those three elements on the same road space, saying, "the space will generally be lacking to realise all desirable facilities", but postpones again the choice to the "stage to work out". At the public hearing, in response to objections maid by residents around Rodeweg, which the Discussion Plan integrated into the accessibility route, the municipality replied, "This is a difficult consideration, which precisely fits into the character of the Plan Traffic and Transport"114. However, the Definitive Plan again postpones the choice, showing not only Rodeweg but also Nieuwe Ebbingestraat as the accessibility route in the map (Figure 6). It says, "a proposal, which is further worked out, will be presented in the framework of the traffic plan for the inner city north". On the other hand, roads around the Shopping Centre Paddepoel, which were "in study" in the Discussion Plan and were still actually in study, are designated as the neighbourhood opening roads, as demanded by shopkeepers, without any explanation.

To sum up, the Definitive Plan had added further confusion to the already confusing plan, wiped out all those traces that indicated restrictive measures against cars, and, moreover, almost lost its significance as a plan, that is, a measure to direct policies in the future. Judging from such a content (and volume), planning must have been in fact suspended after reactions were published or comments on them were written, and have been hastily completed for subsidies.

5.4 Decision

The Definitive Plan being published, the Neighbourhood Committee Noorderplantsoenbuurt asked the municipal council to hold fast to the closure of Leliesingel. According to the committee, it was "the evidence of a weak and careless government that the municipality of Groningen, in the Definitive Plan Traffic and Transport, does not exclude the possibility that Leliesingel remains open for car traffic"115. The ENFB agreed with the main car structure proposed in the Definitive Plan, but disagreed with the idea that "other streets can also continue to carry out the function for through car traffic" 116. Residents around Rodeweg demanded to completely give up the road as the accessibility route, and organisations for the disabled also expressed objections, because the Definitive Plan did not integrate their suggestions, such as the "attractive pedestrian routes" at the city level.

On the other hand, although businesspeople or their organisations strongly opposed the Discussion Plan, their objections against the Definitive Plan were not reported in the Nieuwsblad at all. At the municipal council meeting on December 8th, 1982, where the

Definitive Plan was discussed, filling the strangers' gallery were not businesspeople but residents around Rodeweg and members of organisations for the disabled. While the PPR and PSP were dissatisfied with the plan as a whole, because "the *college* in fact makes no clear choice in favour of public transport and slow traffic, at the cost of cars", the VVD expressed an anxiety that "the *college* still wants to place too much obstacles in the way of car traffic, to the detriment of the business world". Although "more than twenty changes" were proposed, all were rejected by the governing coalition of the PvdA and CDA, which had been formed in September after the local election, and the Definitive Plan was approved without any change.

6. Conclusion

In the modification of the VCP, which had been going on almost simultaneously, the leaders of the PvdA could keep the principle of the VCP, withstanding demands for deregulation from the business community¹¹⁹. That is, they could protect an existing plan, relying on hard facts. However, experiencing huge opposition against the VCP and, more directly, a well-organised and funded campaign against the traffic plan for the northern neighbourhoods, they had become extremely cautious and reluctant in introducing a new traffic plan that included measures to restrain car traffic. The Discussion Plan Traffic and Transport was already very ambiguous, particularly in terms of restraining car use and making residential neighbourhoods car-limited. However, businesspeople or their organisations made a strenuous objection even to such an ambiguous plan through limited opportunities for participation. Their arguments were not always reasonable, and sometimes emotional. The serious effect of the VCP on the inner city economy had not been proved at all¹²⁰. The arguments concerning the ring roads were completely against the basics of environment friendly traffic policy. Indeed, car traffic might decrease to a certain extent in neighbourhoods, if the ring roads were in service. However, sooner or later, in response to the expanded road capacity, car traffic as a whole would increase, causing congestion on the ring roads and a nuisance in neighbourhoods. An outcry would almost certainly start for expanding the ring roads or constructing the second ring roads. However, their arguments weighted more heavily than those of the environmental camp or neighbourhood residents. The Definitive Plan was almost empty as a plan. Judging from not only the plan's content but also the fact that planning had been actually suspended, we can say, in the words of the ENFB, that the leaders of the PvdA finally looked to the right, deviating from their party framework. Exactly consistent with this, after the local election in June 1982, the PvdA of Groningen decided to discard the left-wing B&W and to form a new B&W with the CDA. At the municipal council committee on November 8th, 1979, which dealt with the Discussion Plan, CDA councillor W. Bakker insisted, "it is an ostrich policy not to recognise the important place that the car occupies in our society", and asked for building more parking spaces around the inner city, and making Oosterhamriktracé, which was intended to become an exclusive bus lane, available also for cars. Wallage rather welcomed this frank statement as the proof of the significance of the left-wing B&W:

He (Bakker - by the author) indeed once more shows clearly, with his statement, that political *meerderheidscolleges* make sense, because there are substantially fundamental differences of opinion, which make it desirable not to govern everything together at the municipal level. ¹²¹

Concerning this "modest traffic policy", the Nieuwsblad concluded, "The municipal executive has drawn a lesson from the bitter confrontations over the traffic plan for the inner city" However, the lesson from the VCP, which political leaders should have learned, is rather that a traffic plan to restrain car use does not necessarily have a harmful influence on the economy, while it does dramatically improve physical and

social environment, even if it might arouse strong opposition from the business community.

In the meantime, the municipality actually introduced some measures that resulted in narrowing the roadways. On Eikenlaan, Korreweg and Petrus Campersingel, bike paths were constructed, and a buss lane was introduced on Pleiadenlaan. Some intersections on Kapteynlaan, Sumatralaan and Asingastraat were narrowed so that drivers had to slow down and pedestrians and bikes could cross safely. However, all those measures were planned and introduced outside the framework of the Plan Traffic and Transport, sometimes responding to repeated complaints from neighbourhood residents. In other words, those measures could be introduced, because they were planned separately from the Plan Traffic and Transport, without attracting attention from the business community, although shopkeepers of the Shopping Centre Paddepoel brought a lawsuit for the bus lane on Pleiadenlaan immediately after it was introduced.

After the Plan Traffic and Transport was decided, traffic planning for the northern neighbourhoods had again come to the surface, for which an investigation on traffic situation had been going on. Despite strong opposition from the business community, this planning had ultimately led to closing Noorderplantsoen for cars in 1994. This long history would be dealt with in the next paper.

Notes

- 1 See TSUBOHARA, S. (2003), URSI-rapport 302
- 2 Gemeenteprogramma 74-78, 3-4
- 3 Gemeenteprogramma 78-82, 8/11
- 4 About how district teams of the PvdA of Groningen worked in the 1970s, See TSUBOHARA, S. (2005), Research Report 310
- 5 Nieuwsblad van het Noorden, November 21st, 1978
- 6 ibid., December 22nd, 1976
- 7 interwijkverkeer
- 8 Nieuwsblad, January 4th, 1977
- 9 ibid., September 5th, 1978
- 10 ibid., April 15th, 1978
- 11 Remark by Wallage. ibid., April 15th, 1978
- 12 vingeroefening
- 13 Nieuwsblad, September 26th, 1978
- 14 ibid., September 16th, 1978
- 15 ibid.
- 16 Stichting Winkelcentrum Paddepoel
- 17 Nieuwsblad, September 26th, 1978
- 18 Winkeliersvereniging Paddepoel
- 19 Nieuwsblad, October 3rd, 1978
- 20 ibid., May 4th, 1983
- 21 ibid., October 13th, 1978
- 22 ibid., October 17th, 1978
- 23 ibid., December 8th, 1978
- 24 ibid., February 6th, 1979
- 25 Discussienota, 14
- 26 ibid., 15
- 27 ibid.
- 28 hoofdfietspaden
- 29 fietsroutes door verkeersluwe gebieden
- 30 Discussienota, 40
- 31 ibid., 1
- 32 hoofdwegennet
- 33 bereikbaarheidsroutes
- 34 Discussienota, 18
- 35 ibid., 18-19
- 36 ibid., 19
- 37 ibid., 20
- 38 teruggebracht
- 39 hoofdontsluiting voor de wijken en buurten
- 40 Discussienota, 22
- 41 ibid., 21
- 42 ibid., 20
- 43 ibid., 26-27
- 44 vervalt uit huidige hoofdstruktuur
- 45 hoofdwegenstructuur
- 46 hoofdontsluitingsstructuur

- 47 uit de hoofdontsluiting genomen
- 48 uit de hoofdstructuur genomen
- 49 Discussienota, 29
- 50 buurtontsluitingsweg
- 51 Discussienota, 30
- 52 ibid., 29
- 53 ibid., 40
- 54 ibid., 59
- 55 ibid., 1
- 56 Nieuwsblad, June 28th, 1979
- 57 Discussienota, 1
- 58 Reacties op Discussienota, 10
- 59 ibid., 19
- 60 ibid., 14
- 61 hoofdroutes
- 62 Reacties op Discussienota, 10
- 63 ibid., 19
- 64 Remark by the ENFB. ibid., 383
- 65 Remark by de PPR (werkgroep Verkeer). ibid., 403
- 66 Remark by the ENFB. ibid., 373
- 67 Remark by the ENFB. ibid., 383
- 68 Remark by the PSP (werkaktiegroep Volkshuisvesting en Planologie). ibid., 390
- 69 Remark by the ENFB. ibid., 374
- 70 knippen
- 71 afsluiting
- 72 The literal translation is "shopping garden".
- 73 Remark by the ENFB, Reacties op Discussienota, 383-384
- 74 werkgroep Verkeer
- 75 Reaktie op de Nota Verkeer en Vervoer
- 76 Quotation from the written opinion submitted by the Dutch Christian Employers Association North (*Nederlands Christelijk Werkgeversverbond Noord*), Reacties op Discussienota, 189
- 77 Makelaardij Zeeven. ibid., 266
- 78 The BOVAG is an association for car-related industries. ibid., 204
- 79 Coöperatieve Vereniging Eigenaren in het Winkelcentrum De Paddepoel. ibid., 221-222
- 80 Winkeliersvereniging Folkingestraat. ibid., 229
- 81 Ondernemersvereniging "Zuiderdiep". ibid., 231
- 82 Winkeliersvereniging Koopcentrum-Oosterpoort. ibid., 228
- 83 This shop is located in the Shopping Centre Paddepoel. ibid., 282
- 84 ibid., 318
- 85 zakelijk
- 86 Quotation from the written opinion submitted by The Commercial Club (*De Commerciale Club*). Reacties op Discussienota, 233
- 87 Quotation from the written opinion submitted by the Working Group Transport Organisations (*Werkgroep Transportorganisaties*). ibid., 202
- 88 Quotation from the written opinion submitted by The Commercial Club. ibid., 233
- 89 Quotation from the written opinion submitted by the Cooperative Association of Owners in the Shopping Centrum The Paddepoel. ibid., 223-224
- 90 Quotation from the written opinion submitted by the KNOV. ibid., 215
- 91 Buurtcomitees Noorderplantsoen West en Oost. ibid., 84

- 92 ibid., 18
- 93 Overlegorgaan Korrewegwijk. ibid., 69/71
- 94 Opbouwwerk Vinkhuizen. ibid., 73
- 95 Quotation from the written opinion submitted by the Street Contact Committee Nieuwe Boteringestraat (*Straatkontaktcommissie Nieuwe Boteringestraat*). ibid., 82-83
- 96 *knip*
- 97 Buurtcommité de Hoogte en Buurtoverleg Bedumerstraat, ibid., 75-76
- 98 Wijkbelangenvereniging West-Indische Buurt. ibid., 80
- 99 ibid., 56
- 100 ibid., 97
- 101 ibid., 2
- 102 grote stilte. Nieuwsblad, November 3rd, 1982
- 103 ibid., October 28th, 1980
- 104 Vaststellingsnota, 4
- 105 Bijdrageregeling verkeers- en vervoersvoorzieningen and Ministeriële regeling verkeerscirculatieplan
- 106 bovenwijkse verkeers- en vervoersvoorzieningen
- 107 hoofdverkeerstructuur
- 108 hoofd-autostructuur, hoofd-fietsstructuur and hoofd-busstructuur
- 109 wijksgewijze aanpak
- 110 bovenwijkse autoverkeer
- 111 wijkontsluitingswegen
- 112 Discussienota, 39
- 113 autoluwe fietsroutes and fietsvoorzieningen langs autoroutes
- 114 Reacties op Discussienota, 15
- 115 Buurtcomitee Noorderplantsoenbuurt, into which Buurtcomitees Noorderplantsoen West and Oost were combined. Nieuwsblad, November 23rd, 1982
- 116 Tussenstap/Bijlage VII, 132
- 117 Nieuwsblad, December 7th, 1982
- 118 ibid.
- 119 See TSUBOHARA, S. (2007), URSI-rapport 317
- 120 ibid.
- 121 Nieuwsblad, November 9th, 1979
- 122 ibid., 1982

References

Gemeente Groningen (1979), Discussienota Verkeer en Vervoer

Gemeente Groningen (1980), Reacties op Discussienota Verkeer en Vervoer

Gemeente Groningen (1982), Vaststellingsnota Verkeer en Vervoer

Gemeente Groningen (1984), Tussenstap/Bijlage VII

PvdA Groningen, Gemeenteprogramma 74-78

PvdA Groningen, Gemeenteprogramma 78-82

TSUBOHARA, S. (2003), *Politicisation, Polarisation and Public Participation: Planning History of Groningen, the Netherlands, in 1970s (1)*, URSI-rapport 302, Urban and Regional Studies Institute, University of Groningen

TSUBOHARA, S. (2005), Intra-Party Democracy in Groningen Early in the 1970s: decision making process within the labour party concerning the traffic circulation plan, Research Report 310, Urban and Regional Studies Institute, University of Groningen

TSUBOHARA, S. (2007), The effect and modification of the Traffic Circulation Plan (VCP): traffic planning in Groningen in the 1980s (1), URSI-rapport 317, Urban and Regional Studies Institute, University of Groningen

About the author

Education: Graduated from the Department of Urban Engineering, University of Tokyo in 1988.

Graduated from the Graduate School of Engineering, University of Tokyo in 1990. Graduated from the Graduate School of Science and Technology, Kobe University in 1995, receiving a Doctor of Engineering.

Studying in the PhD course at the Faculty of Spatial Sciences, University of Groningen, since April 2005.

Occupation: Joined Tsu City College as instructor in April 1996 and promoted to associate professor in April 1997.

Transferred to Prefectural University of Kumamoto as associate professor in April 1999, serving in that position until March 2005.

Address: Faculty of Spatial Sciences

University of Groningen Zernikecomplex Landleven5 Postbus 800 9700 AV Groningen The Netherlands

E-mail: s.tsubohara@rug.nl

This report is a result of the PhD project, which is being conducted at the Faculty of Spatial Sciences, University of Groningen. My supervisor was Prof. dr. Henk Voogd, who had passed away in March, 2007, and is Prof. dr. Greg Ashworth. This paper would be ultimately integrated into my dissertation. I always welcome your comments on this paper.